



## LaPorte County Health Department

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# Coping With Stress Caused by H1N1 Virus Concerns

### **I am worried. What can I do?**

All this information about H1N1 may be stressful to you. You may worry about your own health and the health of those you care about. Worry, fear, anxiety and concerns about the future are common reactions in this kind of situation. When you go through a stressful event, it is common to experience some of the following:

- Change in sleep and appetite
- Forgetfulness
- Less interest in daily activities
- Increased irritability and impatience

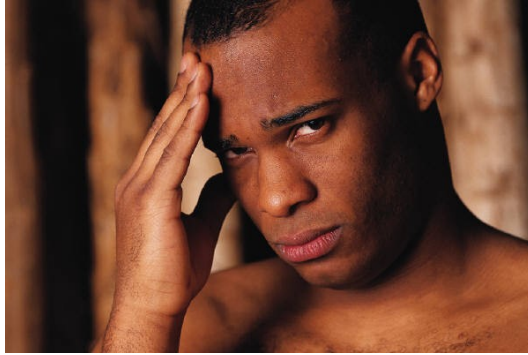


Some people may have more severe stress reactions. These reactions can affect your life at home, work, school and in the community. These can include:

- Pounding or racing heart
- Shortness of breath
- Tightness in the chest
- Feeling dizzy or faint
- Chills or hot flashes
- Fear of losing control
- Trembling, shaking, sweating
- Feelings of choking or smothering
- Nausea or stomachache
- Numbness or tingling sensations
- Feeling like things are unreal



Sometimes when people have feelings of stress, they think that they are sick. Feelings such as worry, fear and anxiety are usually not signs of a physical illness. They are usually signs of stress. However, it is always important to check with a medical provider to assess your health status if unusual symptoms occur.



### **How can I cope with severe stress?**

- To reduce stress, try to breathe slowly and deeply. If you have severe anxiety and feel breathless, it may help to breathe into a paper bag.
- Try not to think or talk about fears for the future. **STAY IN THE PRESENT.** Notice what is really happening now, rather than what might happen in the future.
- Focus on simple routine tasks. If fears about what is happening seem overwhelming, think about the facts, not your fears. Get the facts. Visit <http://www.in.gov/flu/> or [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/)

### **How can I cope with the stress associated with H1N1 Flu?**

- Continue routines for yourself and your family, such as regular meals, bedtimes and exercise.
- Keep busy. Find tasks that you and your family can do together. Focus on day-to-day plans.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol. These can make you less alert and can cause serious health problems.
- Stay connected with friends and family. Reach out to people by phone and email.
- Try to avoid upsetting images.
- Listen to the television or radio for health and safety information. Turn off the TV or radio if they continue to play frightening images or stories.
- If you feel scared or overwhelmed, talk with someone about your feelings. This can reduce your stress and help you feel less lonely.

### **How will children respond to the stress associated with H1N1 Flu?**

Some children may start acting like they did when they were younger:

- Thumb sucking or bed wetting
- Withdrawal
- Unusual amount of crying
- Clinging to parents
- Nightmares
- Not wanting to go to bed



### **Teenagers might:**



- Worry about what might happen
- Act without thinking or act aggressively
- Use drugs or alcohol
- Resist parental authority
- Withdraw or become depressed
- Become easily irritated or impatient

### **How can I help my child to cope?**

- Talk about your own feelings clearly and calmly. This shows your child that many different feelings are a common response to stress.
- Provide information that your child can understand.
- Encourage questions. Expect repeat questions.
- Tell your child that you will do everything you can to keep him safe. Repeat this often.
- Help your child to keep in touch with friends by phone and email.
- Encourage children to draw pictures. Art work can help children to express their feelings.
- Hold and hug your child often. This provides extra reassurance, comfort and caring.
- Spend extra time with your child, especially at bedtime.
- Maintain your child's routine.
- Teach your child things she can do to protect herself (hand washing, coughing into her sleeve).
- Praise good behavior.



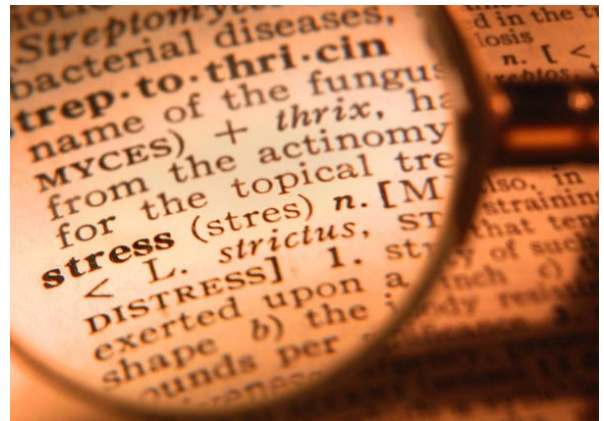
### **When will the feelings of stress go away?**

The effects of stress may show up right away or may come months later. For most people, stressful feelings go away soon after the stressful event ends. Sometimes, people still feel stressed long after the emergency is over. These are all common responses to a stressful situation.

If you have feelings that make it difficult to function in your daily life, consider seeking professional help. Find help through your health care provider or clergy person. Or call the Indiana Division of Mental Health and Addiction at 317-232-7800.

### **What can I do to recover?**

- Remember that stress reactions are common responses to abnormal events. For most people, THEY WILL GO AWAY in time.
- Talk to someone about your feelings.
- Find fun and relaxing activities for you and your family.
- Get plenty of rest and exercise.
- Find ways to help others. Offer support to others. Share information about resources.



**Get information on how to make an emergency plan for your family  
at [www.in.gov/dhs/](http://www.in.gov/dhs/)**